

BEYOND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: TOWARDS PEDAGOGIC LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

In the wash-up of the school effectiveness research and a growing disenchantment with the lack of change in schools, instructional leadership was promoted as the harbinger of change and the salvation of schooling. While the concept of instructional leadership has been predominant in theorising about school leadership and is supposedly widely applied in schools, it has inherent limitations. These limitations centre firstly upon instructional leadership, typically concerning principal- leadership and not teacher- leadership. This is inconsistent with contemporary leadership approaches that emphasise the need for multiple leadership throughout the school. Secondly, the notion of instruction implies focus on teacher actions rather than on student learning.

The notion of pedagogic leadership is proposed as an alternative to instructional leadership. Pedagogy concerns enabling the learning and intellectual growth of students in contrast to instruction that treats students as the object of curriculum implementation. Successful classroom pedagogy requires that teachers understand how students learn and have the autonomy to design, implement and assess educational activities that meet the needs of individual and all students. The role of pedagogical leaders circumscribes informed teacher practise and reflection, empowering teachers to exercise professional responsibility and discretion, and demonstrating credible knowledge of learning and teaching processes.

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Introduction

The effectiveness of schools in educating students is highly dependent upon the presence and nature of multi-level leadership within the individual school. While principals are formally required to lead the school, leadership is not the sole province of the principalship. Indeed most schools are characterised by a combination of formal and informal leadership as evidenced by teachers assuming responsibility for particular tasks and programs. Although the leadership of schools is a complex phenomenon, the outcomes of successful school leadership are readily identifiable. These outcomes centre upon the quality of pedagogy provided by teachers and the engagement of students in learning. Pedagogic change is difficult (Planning & Evaluation Service, 2000) and as Stigler and Hiebert (1999, p.83) noted, teachers tend to replicate the culture and pedagogy of their personal experiences at school, as students.

The following discussion is a synthesis of literature and research into school leadership and changing teachers' pedagogic practices. In particular, it identifies the key factors in bringing about pedagogic change by concluding with proposal of a conceptual framework of pedagogic leadership.

Leadership in Schools

Interest in the study of leadership burgeoned in the post-War period. Early research concentrated on what were thought to be the essential precursors to leadership- personality and physical traits (Owens, 1987). Weber's (1947) separation of charismatic leadership from position-based leadership promoted the belief that leadership was more of a consequence of a set of human actions based on emotional power that engaged the support of others (Solomon, 2003, p.202). When Ciulla (2003) tracked variations in the definitions of leadership from the 1940s she noted that in the 1990s the support for the leader was more an inter-dependent relationship between the leader and the led, which was significantly different from the traditional view of leadership. In education Sergiovanni (1984) identified multiple dimensions of leadership he termed "leadership forces". These were technical, human, educational, symbolic, and cultural. Inclusion of the educational force was significant and typifies early differentiation between the leadership of schools and that of other organisations. Sergiovanni (1984, p.6) described the educational force as "expert knowledge about matters of education and schooling". Most recent models of educational leadership emphasise the importance of school leaders being heavily involved in the school's instructional program (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning, 2001; Hill, 2001, 2002; Schlechty, 2001). Murphy & Hallinger (1992) noted that in the 1980s, principals needed to become curriculum and instructional leaders if they were to coordinate local school improvement. This dimension of school leadership is termed instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 1998; Gupton, 2003; Lashway, 1995, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992; National Association of Elementary School Principals 2002).

Instructional leadership

It is unfortunate that much of the current research on pedagogic change is associated with the concept of instructional leadership and is so deeply embedded in educational literature. Firstly, the use of *instruction* is a problematic and limiting term and, secondly, the *leadership* aspect is often ignored or confused.

While many writers use *instruction* as a synonym for *teaching* or *pedagogy*, instruction is a limiting, clinical term that relates to one part of the teaching and learning cycle. Instruction does not encompass the formative or summative assessment that effective teachers do as a matter of course. Instruction does not consider the affect of the teacher's body language or discourse that helps create a learning environment that promotes academic risk taking. Instruction does not describe the influence of the class culture on students' understanding of democratic decision-making.

Secondly, much of the research and literature on instructional leadership is characterised by descriptions of principal behaviours as distinct from the behaviours of other members of the school organisation or community. For example, National Association of Elementary School Principals (2002, pp. 6-7) defined instructional leadership by setting out six standards of what principals should know and be able to do. This list included: leading schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the centre; setting high expectations for academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults; demanding content and instruction that ensure student achievement of agreed upon academic standards; creating a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals; using multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement; and actively engaging the community to create a shared responsibility for student and school success. Scheerens and Bosker (1997, quoted by Hill, 2002, p.53) identified five dimensions of instructional leadership:

Time devoted to educational versus administrative tasks.

- The head teacher as a metacontroller of classroom processes.
- The head teacher as a quality controller of classroom teachers.
- The head teacher as a facilitator of work-oriented teams.
- The head teacher as an initiator and facilitator of staff professionalization..

The Scheerens and Bosker model identifies the constructs that comprise the principal led model of instructional leadership.

A more realistic model of the instructional leadership needs to acknowledge that within schools there are multiple layers of instructional leadership, not just that ascribed to principals (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson & Hann, 2002; Lashway, 2002; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). Gupton (2003) noted that it is now accepted that instructional leadership is not the sole domain of principals and secondly, instructional leadership can be either direct or indirect actions. Daresh and Playko (cited in Gupton, 2003, p.32) defined instructional leadership as: "...direct or indirect behaviours that significantly affect teacher instruction and, as a result, student learning." If this definition were to be taken at face value, a politician's direction to spend more money investigating Aboriginal learning styles would be seen as instructional leadership, even if the act were driven solely for political gain. This definition failed to signal that students' learning should be improved, not simply "affected".

Alternatively, the notion of instructional leadership is often expanded to include the principal giving attention to both instructional and non-instructional tasks. Balancing the administrative role with the curriculum/instructional role became the challenge of the principalship as Murphy and Hallinger (1992) noted when they queried whether one person could do the job and suggested the need for empowering others to exercise leadership. While this proposition is consistent with the notion of multiple instructional leadership referred to previously, it applies to leadership in general and not just to instructional leadership. In addition, it requires leadership to be viewed in terms of what it enables others to do rather than prescribing what others should do. This approach is termed facilitative instructional leadership. Lashway (1995) concurred with Hallinger (1992) and noted that while earlier work had identified the characteristics of instructional leadership, facilitative leadership that empowered others seemed a more effective approach in engaging staff. Quoting Prager, Lashway (1995) observed that the *either/or* argument of teacher engagement was a false

dichotomy and the “... optimal solution would support collegial, empowering processes aimed toward specific instructional goals.” If Lashway were correct, then 1980s model of instructional leadership is significantly different from facilitative instructional leadership, and the skills, knowledge and values that instructional leaders require are significantly different.

A strong argument can be made that the facilitative instructional leadership of the mid 1990s, which empowers staff has superseded the top-down, principal driven model of instructional leadership of the 1980s. Lashway supported this thesis:

“Instructional leadership of the 1980s was principal-centred, often accompanied by images of heroic leaders single-handedly keeping the school on track.... However, a growing number of researchers say that instructional leadership is distributed across the school community, with principals, superintendents, teachers, and policy makers having complementary responsibilities” (Lashway, 2002).

This examination of conceptions of instructional leadership has evidenced the importance of school leaders, whether they are in positions of formal or informal leadership, needing to lead the school’s instructional program. It has also drawn attention to the complex nature of school leadership and the tension between leadership of instructional and non-instructional aspects of schools. The evolution of principal-based instructional leadership into facilitative instructional leadership emphasises the need for an holistic view of school leadership embracing leadership of both student instruction, the formal organisation and of the total school community.

Pedagogy and Leadership

While *pedagogy* is a contested concept, it covers a wider range of aspects of the teaching act than instruction. Pedagogy is derived from *paidagogos* (Greek) meaning, the teacher of children, the intentional use of the term *pedagogy*, instead of *instruction* or *teaching*, in modern times, can be conceptual, geographical and, or ideological. The term *pedagogy* was relatively uncommon in a decade ago but is currently being used more frequently in publications and teachers' discourse. There appear to be four, inter-related clusters of meaning of pedagogy in the literature:

- Pedagogy as an inclusive view of all aspects teaching but not simply instruction (Mortimore, 1999; Newmann & Associates, 1996);
- Pedagogy as a political tool for the enculturation students (Freire, 1977; Smyth, 1985; van Manen, 1999);
- Pedagogy as student centred learning and teaching, which specifically excludes didactic teaching (Hamilton & McWilliam, 2001), and
- Pedagogy as student-teacher relationships (van Manen, 1999)

Pedagogy specifically recognises the cultural and societal aspects of what is learned and why it is learned. Pedagogy acknowledges aspects of learning that were previously described as the “hidden curriculum”. Pedagogy peels back the veneer of teaching methodology to expose the conscious and unconscious decisions made by school leaders as agents of enculturation. Pedagogic leadership is therefore an act that motivates others, thus facilitating culturally aware learning in a third party.

Current research notes how difficult it is to bring about changes in teachers’ preferred pedagogies (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Planning and Evaluation Service, 2000; King and Newmann, 2000) because teaching is a culturally embedded act and very difficult to change. Professional development has had very little effect on teachers’ practices because most of the professional

development that is available (e.g. conferences) banks knowledge and skills for possible future use. The loss of information gathered at conferences, and not used in the school, is extremely high.

The most effective method for school administrators to learn is at the point of need. King and Newmann (2000), advocates of authentic learning, claimed that teachers learn best when they:

- Can concentrate on instruction and student outcomes in the specific contexts in which they teach;
- Have sustained opportunities to study, to experiment and receive helpful feedback on specific innovations;
- Collaborate with professional peers, both within and outside their schools, and when they gain further expertise through access to external researchers and program developers;
 - Have influence over the substance and process of professional learning.

The principles of authentic learning for teachers are equally applicable to school leaders and the King and Newmann (2000) work reiterated the principles of adult learning (Burns, 1995).

School Leadership and Change

A major shortcoming of leadership studies has been the failure to overtly acknowledge that leadership is about change. Leaders attract followers by offering to change at least one aspect of their personal circumstances. Ciulla (2003) noted in her archetypal definition of leadership in the 1990s that there is a two-way relationship between the leader and the led. In a definitional sense it can be argued that change is an *a priori* part of leadership, because leadership without change is management of the *status quo*. Hodgkinson (1983, p.186) referred to the relationship between the megalomaniac poet-leader and the “followership,” and the tenuous nature of that co-dependency:

“When and if he should lose his vision, or be frustrated in his superimposition of it upon the world, the form corrupts and madness can ensue. The vision lost he may only be left with the power of his office against the frustration and implacability of the realities. The followership may sense this and falter.”

As a result the leadership of the likes of Hitler and Stalin descends into dictatorship. This situation is problematic for the led for two reasons:

Firstly, the relationship between both parties loses its voluntary character; and
Secondly, the change process does not bring the promised rewards for those who follow.

In schools, as Hargreaves et al. (2001, p.175) noted, significant school-wide change is impossible without effective school leadership and the “... educational change literature consistently points to school administrators as vital agents for creating the conditions in which school reform can succeed.” This statement by Hargreaves and associates highlighted the multi-dimensional nature of leading change in schools. Hargreaves’s statement illustrated the role that principals play in establishing the infrastructure for change (the climate, funding etc.) but the main role is leading the change (content and process). The concept of leading, in this sense, is predicated on a belief about teaching. As van Manen (1993, p.9) noted, “(I)t is possible to learn all of the techniques of instruction but remain pedagogically unfit as a teacher.” Pedagogic leadership takes into account the “Why?” “How?” and “When?” of learning, not just the “What?” Pedagogic leadership is based on dialogue, not monologue and the learners are essential participants in the discussion. Evans (1999, p.11) made the point that principals who are not guided by pedagogic choice “... resort to a thoroughly bureaucratized way of relating to teachers” and as a result teaching becomes an occupation defined by expectations. Fullan (2001) portrayed leadership as the development of a culture of change in which “... more good things happen and fewer bad things happen” (Fullan, 2001 p.4). :

Schools, because of their role in the enculturation of future generations, are necessarily involved in moral and ethical issues (Begley, 1999; Hodgkinson, 1978, 1983; Leonard, 1999). Fullan (2001, p.13) warned that the moral purpose takes into account both the means and ends of the change process, particularly in education, which is charged with the development of citizens in future society (Leonard, 1999). Fullan (2001, p.28) noted "... that moral purpose and the sustained performance of organizations are mutually dependent." It is, therefore, important for the moral purpose to be incorporated in all aspects of the strategic planning such as the shared vision (Senge et al., 1995, 2000), which is designed to win commitment and effort from all of the stakeholders.

The literature recognises the need to change teachers' teaching methods for a variety of economic and managerialist reasons (Glickman, 1998; Government of Western Australia, 1992; Robertson, 1998). The moral reason for facilitating better learning, that students have a right to learn (Darling-Hammond et al, 1997), has attracted less attention. Research underwriting the moral purpose of instruction has confirmed the thesis that better teaching results in increased student learning (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Newmann & Associates, 1996; Watkins & Mortimore, 1999) and student success has resulted in greater student motivation and engagement. In relation to instructional leadership, the moral purpose of improving student learning concerns attainment of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor educational outcomes. Enabling student learning and engagement is a moral imperative for school leaders.

Fullan's (2001) second dimension of leadership is that leaders must understand the change process. At the school level change is complex and non-linear. Fullan (2001, p.5) advised that "... leaders who combine a commitment to moral purpose with a healthy respect for the complexities of the change process not only will be more successful but also will unearth deeper moral purpose." To embed the change, there is a need to re-culture the school and change prevailing beliefs, values and attitudes of teachers, students and parents (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001; Dalin, Rolff and Kleekamp, 1993; Fullan, 1993)

In complex reculturing the establishment of a shared vision and purpose, that describe the development of the change and the change processes, is critical (Cavanagh & MacNeill, 2002; MacNeill & Lander, 2003; MacNeill & Silcox, 2000; NAESP, 2002; Senge, 1995, Senge, 2000). While the principal may have a key role in the development of the shared vision, the shared vision advises all stakeholders of the agreed direction and content of change. In relation to instruction, the shared vision, purpose and agreed values guide teachers' choices of appropriate instruction. In the translation of the vision, purpose, and values into action through school planning there is agreement and understanding of how the change will evolve.

In schools, there has been a surfeit of change and innovation that Fullan (2001, p.109) described as problematic because of the nature of the "disconnected, episodic, piecemeal and superficially adorned projects". Despite the potential dissonance, schools cannot opt out of change. The leaders' task is to lead the school community through the potential problems by creating an agreed sense of direction through a vision. However, while there may be agreement about a sense of direction, what leaders do often is not scripted and as Heifetz and Linsky (2002) observed, leadership is an improvisational art. Amidst the uncertainty of change, Fullan (2001, p.118) identified three coherence-making features:

- Lateral accountability that engages peers at all levels of the organisation;
- Sorting which is applied against the tests of utility and fitting the organisational vision; and,
- Shared commitment, in which people inspire and stimulate each other.

The school must establish, implement, and achieve agreed academic standards for students (McEwan, 2003) and confirm expectations and standards for staff (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Miller, 2001; McEwan, 2003; NAESP, 2002).

Fullan (2001) made the point that in people-based organisations (such as schools) relationships are the key to successful change. Fullan stated “... we have found that the single factor common to every successful change initiative is that relationships improve (Fullan, 2001, p.5). Relationships are important parts of the determinants of success but are also a consequence of success. Leaders are charged with constantly fostering purposeful interactions and problem solving (Fullan, 2001, p.5). Fullan saw the sense of community as one extension of positive relationships within a school. Relationship building is dependent on many interpersonal skills (McEwan, 2003). While the literature on instructional leadership emphasises cultural change (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987), the interpersonal relationships between staff are a key factor in effecting the cultural change (Crowther et al., 2002; McEwan, 2003; Sullivan & McCabe, 1988; Fink & Resnick, 2001; McEwan, 2003). Relationships in a school context are to do with learning and much of the literature on instructional leadership emphasises the principal’s role in developing relationships with teachers by visiting classrooms (Fink & Resnick, 2001), commenting on teachers’ practices (Fink & Resnick, 2001) and encouraging them to be innovative and take risks (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001).

It is ironic that whilst schools exist to educate children, the principles and processes of learning are rarely applied to organisational learning and the professional learning of teachers (Hargreaves, 1995; O’Neil, 1995). Fullan (2001, p.92) observed that “... schools are in the business of teaching and learning, yet they are terrible at learning from each other.” The research on instructional leadership emphasises the role of the principal in knowledge creation and sharing. At the dyadic (collaborative pairs), and whole staff level the literature on instructional leadership emphasises the principal directly interacting, in a hierarchical sense, with teachers to improve their performance (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; McEwan, 2003; Petersen, 1999; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). The shortcoming in this model is that knowledge creation and development is dependent on one person. There is a need to widen the base of knowledge finding and sharing throughout the school by teachers assuming responsibility for their own learning and that of colleagues (King, 2002; McEwan, 2003; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001).

A Conceptual Frame for Pedagogic Leadership

Improvement of student learning is a crucial aspect of school leadership. Pedagogic leadership can be viewed as just one component of school leadership or alternatively as a distinct style of school leadership. Irrespective of which view is adopted, the effective leadership of teaching and learning is characterised by specific attributes of the principal, staff and operations of the school. It is proposed that pedagogic leadership will be evidenced by:

1. Discharge of moral obligations concerning societal expectations of schooling;
2. Presence of a shared vision and sense of mission about student learning;
3. Commitment to mission realisation by staff and students;
4. Application of expert knowledge about student learning and development;
5. Improvement of pedagogic practise;
6. The engagement and empowerment of staff;
7. Presence of multiple leadership within the staff;
8. Emphasis on pedagogic rather than administrative functions by leaders;
9. Creation and sharing of knowledge throughout the school;
10. Development of relationships and a sense of community; and
11. Application of a re-culturing approach towards school improvement.

Conclusion

The press for improving the educational outcomes of students in schools has led to increased scrutiny of the nature and outcomes of school leadership. Effective school leadership is often operationalised in terms of improving student learning. If this view is accepted, the purpose and outcomes of leadership concern pedagogy and the change process in schools needs to centre upon improvement of pedagogy. The issue that emerges from this proposition then concerns the leadership practices and processes that will facilitate realisation of these objectives. Principals rarely engage in teaching students and their influence on student learning is secondary in that the primary providers of learning in schools are classroom teachers. The 'bottom-line' outcome of leadership is about the improving learning of students and this will be contingent upon developing and nurturing the capacity of teachers and other members of the school community to improve student learning. This capacity will be enhanced by leaders who provide support for individuals and also recognise the need for individuals to work together so that they develop an understanding of collective vision and mission. Pedagogic leadership is all about the purpose of schooling and the processes that develop school community commitment towards this goal.

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